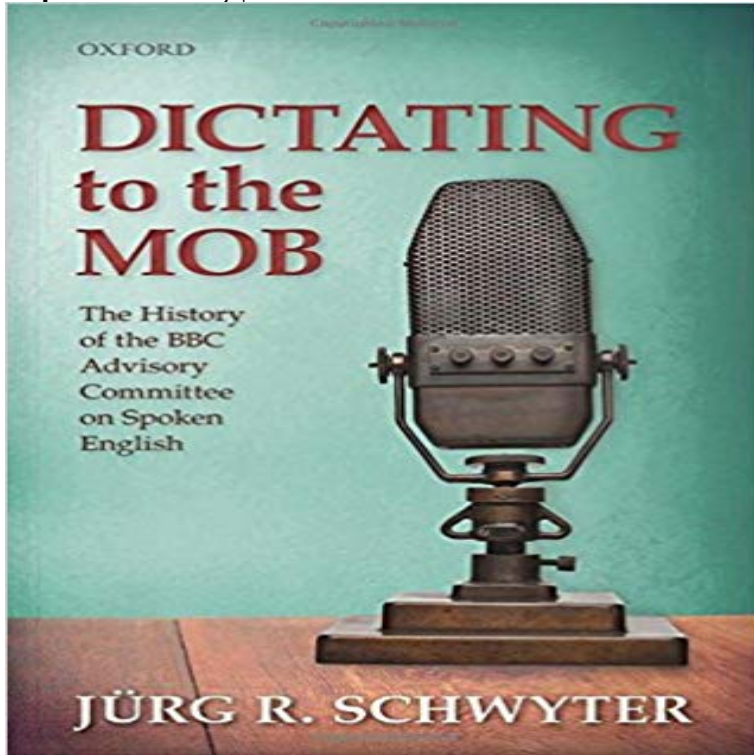


Dictating to the Mob: The History of the BBC Advisory Committee on Spoken English



The BBC's Advisory Committee on Spoken English was set up to provide an authoritative guide to pronunciation and the use of language for BBC announcers. The results of its deliberations were published for general consumption in a pamphlet called Spoken English. Based on primary sources, the compelling story of the Advisory Board during its crucial first 13 years is told here for the first time. It reveals how board members, including George Bernard Shaw and Julian Huxley, soon discovered that standardization and regulation of spoken language is extremely challenging and highly controversial. The first two chapters describe the linguistic aspects of its work, particularly after it had taken on the role of standardizing spoken English, a task well beyond its mandate and the BBC Charter. The third and fourth chapters look at the challenges the Committee encountered in assuming their prescriptive role, the structural crisis which ensued, and the changes to linguistic policies which then followed. Chapter 5 and 6 document the final years of the Committee, explore the reasons for its failure in its role as guardian of properly spoken English, and consider the legacy of the Committee in today's broadcasting. The book will appeal to linguists and historians generally, especially those interested in the English language and language policy.

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